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Analyzing Populist Party Primary Documents

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Title: Analyzing Populist Party Primary Documents**Author:** Cassandra Nelson**Grade Levels:** 11th-12th**Time:** Two 50 Minute class periods**Focus Statement:**

We will be exploring the platform of the Populist Party and the mission of the Populist Party. In order for students to understand the Populist Movement and why it was extremely popular during this time period, they must understand what the Populist Party stood for and how they were different from the other major political parties of the time. Students will have the opportunity to analyze two primary documents and compare and contrast the ideas for the Populist Party and the goals that the Populist Party wants to reach. There will also be a major focus on vocabulary for this lesson because there are terms in this lesson that are from the primary documents and may be unknown by my students.

I plan to teach the History Habit of Mind skill that states “Understanding how things happen and how things change, how human intentions matter, but also how their consequences are shaped by the means of carrying them out, in a tangle of purpose and process.” My students will read both the Mission of the Populist Party and The Omaha Platform. They will compare and contrast the two primary sources. Once students understand both documents and have analyzed them, I will lead a class discussion about how students felt about these sources and why they believe the Populist Party ran on the platform that they created. I also want my students to speculate on whether the Populist Party would survive or not.

MN Standard:

- MN Benchmark 9.4.4.20.6: Describe the major political and social movements of the Progressive Era; analyze their impact on individuals, communities and institutions. (Development of an Industrial United States: 1870-1920)
- MN Benchmark 9.4.4.20.7: Evaluate the effectiveness of political responses to the problems of industrialism, monopoly capitalism, urbanization and political corruption. (Development of an Industrial United States: 1870-1920)

Learning Objective(s):

- Students will be able to identify the main goals of the Populist Party by the end of the two day lesson period
- Students will be able to compare “The Mission of the Populist Movement” with “The Omaha Platform: Launching the Populist Party” by the end of class on day two
- Students will be able to analyze primary documents that they may be faced with in the future by the end of the class period on day two

Resources:

About 40 copies* of “The Mission of the Populist Party”

- About 40 copies* of “The Omaha Platform”
- About 40 copies* of “The Populist Party’s Mission and Platform Statements Questions Worksheet”
- About 40 copies* of “Vocabulary for The Mission of the Populist Movement and The Omaha Platform ”
- 1 key for “The Populist Party’s Mission and Platform Statements Questions Worksheet”
- Doc cam or Overhead if available

Methods/Procedures

Beginning: (20 Minutes)

- We will begin by covering material from previous lesson that we had completed on the Populist Party. These will include...
 - The Farmers' Alliance: Was an organized economic movement among American farmers that developed in the 1870s and 1880s
 - The Farmers' Alliance would later turn into what we're now study, the People's Party, or, as we are calling it in this classroom, the Populist Movement or Populist Party.
 - We have also discussed the people who were supporters of the Populist Party. These include...
 - Women: The Populist Party gave women the opportunity to get involved with politics and it allowed them to start persuading and explaining to the general public why it was important for women to vote and be involved in politics. We discussed Mary Elizabeth Lease, Ann Other and Betty Gay in detail about their contributions to the Populist Party and their fight for woman's rights in politics
 - Black Americans: Even though many individuals of the Populist Party did not support black individuals being involved with the party, black individuals were greatly involved. They had their own branch of the Populist Party and it gave black Americans the opportunity to get involved with politics as well, this being because the party was titled The People's Party.
 - Farmers: Many people who lived out on the plains felt that their voices were going unheard in Washington. They decided to do something about not being heard and fought to arise the Populist Party. This party gave farmers a voice in politics and their causes were heard by those in Washington.
 - We also briefly discussed what the Populist Party fought for as a political party. We will be recovering all of this information in today's lesson and add more information in about the platform of the Populist Party.
- There are also key terms that need to be discussed and understood before the lesson can begin. These key terms include:
 - The Populist Party: a revolt of farmers in the South and Midwest against the Democratic and Republican Parties for ignoring their interests and well-being.
 - The Farmers' Alliance: Was an organized economic movement among American farmers that developed in the 1870's and 1880's. The Farmers' Alliance would later turn into what we were now study, the People's Party, or as we are calling it in this classroom the Populist Movement or Populist Party.
 - Capitalists: a wealthy person who uses money to invest in trade and industry for profit in accordance with the principles of capitalism
 - Free Government: powers are divided between departments, preferably, legislative, executive, and judicial
 - National Bank Act: 1863: designed to create a national banking system, float federal war loans, and establish a national currency.

Middle: Instructional Strategies / Learning Activities: (10 Minutes)

- I will hand out the sheet titled "Vocabulary for the Mission of the Populist Party and the Omaha platform" to each student. I will explain to the students why they are receiving these vocabulary sheets and how they might be helpful for students when it comes to reading the

primary documents. Also hand out the “Populist Party Worksheet” to students. This worksheet will help guide students through both of the readings they will be completing.

End / Summary: (18 Minutes)

- Students will begin reading the primary document “The Omaha Platform: Launching the Populist Party.” I will be walking around the classroom to answer any questions that students may have. Students will use their vocabulary sheets to replace any words that they do not understand in the document with a word or definition that makes more sense. Students will have this time to start and if plausible complete “The Omaha Platform: Launching the Populist Party.” They should use their Populist Party worksheet to guide their reading through their documents.

(2 Minutes)

- I will take the last two minutes of class to explain what they can expect to be doing during the next class period, which is reading “The Mission of the Populist Party” primary document. Students will need to bring their vocabulary sheets that they received today back with them to class tomorrow.

DAY 2

Beginning: (10 Minutes)

- We will start class by reviewing what we did the day before. I will ask the class if they have any questions on the vocabulary sheets that they received the day before. After we go over the vocabulary sheet I will explain the primary document that the students will be reading. I will explain that we will read our second of the two primary documents. The final document is “The Mission of the Populist Party.”
 - I will also show students how I want them to treat a vocabulary word that they may not know and come across in the reading. I want my students to replace the vocabulary word with a key word or a short definition of the word.
 - Also, before students start to read make sure you hand out the Populist Party worksheets. This will help to guide students’ reading.

Middle: Instructional Strategies / Learning Activities: (20 Minutes)

- Students will begin reading the primary document “The Mission of the Populist Party.” I will be walking around the classroom to answer any questions that students may have. Students will use their vocabulary worksheets to replace any words that they do not understand in the document with a word or definition that makes more sense. They should use their Populist Party worksheets to guide their reading through their document.

End / Summary: (3 Minutes)

- I will walk around the room to see how the students’ Populist Party worksheets look and make a check mark in my grade book if they completed the worksheet while reading the second document and also make sure that there is information from the first primary document from day 1 on the worksheet as well.

(17 Minutes)

- We will now discuss the two primary documents as a class. We will go over the worksheet question by question so students can continue to fill in their worksheet with answers that they may have missed. I will then discuss the essay question that will be on the unit test. The essay question will refer to the two primary documents the students have just read in class. I will explain how their essays will be structured and how each questions from the Populist Party worksheet will fit into their essay answer on the test. On the review day of the class I will show students how they could structure their answer and what points are important to cover in

their answer of the essay questions. Students will be shown how to take the quotes and information used on their worksheets to structure their response to the essay question.

Assignment(s):

- Day 1: Students will start reading “The Omaha Platform: Launching the Populist Party” and start working on their “Populist Party worksheet”
- Day 2: Work on “The Populist Party worksheet” will continue and be completed by students today after reading “The Mission of the Populist Party.” This worksheet will be graded and worth 5 points.

Afterwards

Provisions for Individual Differences

- I can simplify any of the primary documents reading more if necessary for any student.

Self-Reflection

Bibliography

Peffer, William Alfred. "The Mission of the Populist Party." *The North American Review* 0157, no. 445 (1893): 665-78.

Tindall, George. "The Omaha Platform: Launching the Populist Party." History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web. 1890. Accessed November 1, 2015. <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5361>.

The Populist Party's Mission and Platform Statements Questions Worksheet

Please answer the questions below about the Populist Party's Mission and Platform Statements. You will use the two primary documents that will be handed out with this worksheet to answer the questions below. Make sure that you have substantial information for all questions as these questions will be your guideline to writing a formal answer to an essay question on the next test.

1. What is the Populist Party's motto?
2. How do both primary documents, The Omaha Platform and the Mission of the Populist Party state that the party will support the people?
3. How are The Omaha Platform and The Mission of the Populist Party similar to the United States Constitution?

4. Discuss the Populist Party's ideas on taxation using The Omaha Platform and The Mission of the Populist Party
5. What are the Populist Party's views on finance? Please use material from both documents to support your answer.
6. Describe the Populists Party's views on United States land and national transportation

Vocabulary for the Mission of the Populist Party and the Omaha Platform

- Alien: Belonging to another person, place, or thing
- Alter mammon: To change wealth or possessions
- Amplify: sufficiently or abundantly
- Ascertain: to make certain, exact, or precise
- Assert: to state or declare positively and often forcefully or aggressively
- Bonds: are loans, or IOUs that are given to companies, a city, or the government and it is necessary for them to pay back the bond.
- Capitalist: A person who has capital especially invested in business; a person of wealth.
- Carriage: the act of carrying
- Chiefly: for the most part; mostly
- Colossal: of an exceptional or astonishing degree
- Consummated: Complete or make perfect
- Co-operation: Means Cooperation
- Creed: a set of fundamental beliefs
- Cultivating: to prepare or prepare and use for the raising of crops
- Delegate: a person acting for another
- Demonetization: to stop using as a monetary standard
- Despotism: a system of government in which the ruler has unlimited power
- Distinguished: marked by excellence
- Emancipate: to free from restraint, control, or the power of another; especially : to free from bondage
- Enterprise: a unit of economic organization or activity ; especially : a business organization
- Equitable: dealing fairly and equally with all concerned
- Forebodes: act as a warning of
- Free government: powers are divided between departments, preferably, legislative, executive, and judicial
- Fruits of the toil: Enjoying what you have worked for
- Greenbacks: a legal-tender note issued by the United States government
- Grievous: causing or characterized by severe pain, suffering, or sorrow
- Heritage: Something possessed as a result of one's natural situation or birth
- Impoverishment: to deprive of strength, richness, or fertility by depleting or draining of something essential
- Inter-state commerce law: made the railroads the first industry subject to Federal regulation
- Invoking: to call forth
- Iron law of wages: is a proposed law of economics that asserts that real wages always tend, in the long run, toward the minimum wage necessary to sustain the life of the worker
- Legal tender: Money that is legally valid for the payment of debts and that must be accepted for that purpose when offered.
- Midst: the interior or central part or point: middle
- Net Profits: the actual profit after working expenses not included in the calculation of gross profit have been paid
- Oppression: a sense of being weighed down in body or mind
- Paramount: superior to all others
- Parity: equivalence of a commodity price expressed in one currency to its price expressed in another

- Paternalism: a system under which an authority undertakes to supply needs or regulate conduct of those under its control in matters affecting them as individuals as well as in their relations to authority and to each other
- Pauperized: to reduce to poverty
- Plundered: use or use up wrongfully
- Posterity: all future generations
- Preamble: an introductory statement; especially; the introductory party of a constitution or statute that usually states the reasons for and intent of the law
- Precedent: prior in time, order, arrangement, or significance
- Privileged: not subject to the usual rules or penalties because of some special circumstance; especially : not subject to disclosure in a court of law
- Scarcity: the quality or state of being scarce (Lack of); especially: want of provisions for the support of life
- Sentiment: an attitude, thought, or judgment prompted by feeling
- Sham: a trick that deludes (to mislead the mind or judgement of)
- Sovereign: one possessing or held to possess supreme political power
- Speculative: involving, based on, or constituting intellectual speculation; also : theoretical rather than demonstrable
- Spoliation: the act of plundering (use or use up wrongfully)
- Subsidized: to furnish with a subsidy (a grant or gift of money)
- Subsistence: real being
- Sufficient: enough to meet the needs of a situation or a proposed end
- Tariff: a schedule of duties imposed by a government on imported or in some countries exported goods
- Temperament: obsolete (No longer in use or no longer useful)
- Tramp: to travel about on foot
- Tranquility: the quality or state of being tranquil (free from stress of mind or spirit)
- Usurers: one that lends money especially at an exorbitant (exceeding the limit) rate
- Vast: a very great in size, amount, degree, intensity, or especially in extent or range
- Weal: A sound, healthy, or prosperous state

The Populist Party's Mission and Platform Statements Questions Worksheet

Please answer the questions below about the Populist Party's Mission and Platform Statements. You will use the two primary documents that will be handed out with this worksheet to answer the questions below. Make sure that you have substantial information for all questions as these questions will be your guideline to writing a formal answer to an essay question on the next test.

7. What is the Populist Party's motto?
 - "Equal rights to all; special privileges to none." (Peffer 665)

8. How do both primary documents, The Omaha Platform and the Mission of the Populist Party state that the party will support the people?
 - "... The love of the whole people for each other and for the nation." (The Omaha Platform: 5th paragraph under preamble)
 - "...one united brotherhood of free men." (The Omaha Platform: 5th Paragraph under preamble)
 - "...an organized demand that the functions of government shall be exercised only for the mutual benefit of all the people." (Peffer 665)
 - "...public good is paramount to private interests." (Peffer 665)

9. How are The Omaha Platform and The Mission of the Populist Party similar to the United States Constitution?
 - (The Omaha Platform: 4th paragraph under preamble)
 - "...to form a more perfect union."
 - "... Establish justice."
 - "... insure domestic tranquility"
 - "... provide for the common defense"
 - "... promote the general welfare"
 - "... secure the blessings of liberty of ourselves and our posterity"
 - (Peffer: 665)
 - "form a more perfect union" by cultivating a national sentiment among the people
 - "...insure domestic tranquility" by securing to every man and woman what they earn
 - "...establish justice" by procuring an equitable distribution of the products and profits of labor
 - "...provide for the common defense" by interesting every citizen in the ownership of his home
 - "...promote general welfare" by abolishing class legislation and limiting the government to its proper functions
 - "...secure the blessing of liberty to ourselves and our posterity" by protecting the producing masses against the spoliation of speculators and usurers

10. What are the Populist Party's views on finance? Please use material from both documents to support your answer. (Finance includes: taxation, currency, interest, and land ownership.)

- (Peffer, 665)
 - "...that taxation should only be for public purposes, and that all moneys raised by taxes should go into the public treasury"
- (Peffer, 666-667)
 - "...exclusively national currency"
 - "... rates of interest for the use of money be reduced to the level of average net profits in productive industries"
 - "...large private land-holding be discouraged by law"
 - "...the kind of money the party wants- gold, silver and paper"
 - "...unlimited quantities,...at a ratio of 16:1"
 - "...that too much (money) is worse than too little"
 - "...paper money cannot safely be issued except on a specie basis"
 - "...the issue ought not to exceed three or four dollars to one dollar of coin reserve"
 - "...no more silver should be coined unless, through international agreement, the principal commercial nations agree to use silver coin to an agreed ratio to gold"
 - "...gold is the only proper and safe money material"
- (Peffer, 672)
 - "Bank notes are not legal tender..."
- (Peffer, 678)
 - "Apply the "iron law of wages" equally to all that work and you scale down the salaries of many useless people. If the Republic is to endure we must encourage the average man."
- (The Omaha Platform: Under Platform, Finance)
 - "We demand a national currency"
 - "...At a tax not to exceed 2% per annum, to be provided as set forth in the sub-treasury plan of the Farmers' Alliance, or a better system."
 - "...unlimited coinage of silver and gold at the present legal ratio of 16 to 1" (Point 1)
 - "...the amount of circulated medium be speedily increased to not less than \$50 per capita" (Point 2) (But, what happens when it exceeds this amount?)
 - "We demand a graduated income tax" (Point 3)
 - "...money of the country should be kept as much as possible in the hands of the people." (Point 4)

11. Describe the Populist Party's views on United States land and national transportation

- (The Omaha Platform: Under Platform: Transportation)
 - "Transportation being a means of exchange and a public necessity, the government should own and operate the railroads in the interest of the people."
- (The Omaha Platform: Under Platform: Land)
 - "The land, including all the natural sources of wealth... should not be monopolized for speculative purposes, and alien ownership of land should be prohibited."
- (Peffer, 666)
 - "...the means of public transportation be brought under public control"
- (Peffer, 675)
 - "...the Populist party favors government ownership and control of railroads"

The Omaha Platform: Launching the Populist Party

Although historians often speak of a “Populist movement” in the 1880s, it wasn’t until 1892 that the People’s or Populist Party was formally organized. The Omaha Platform, adopted by the founding convention of the party on July 4, 1892, set out the basic tenets of the Populist movement. The movement had emerged out of the cooperative crusade organized by the Farmer’s Alliance in the 1880s. The preamble was written by Minnesota lawyer, farmer, politician, and novelist Ignatius Donnelly. Delegates to the convention embraced the platform with great enthusiasm. Many of the specific proposals urged by the Omaha Platform—the graduated income tax, the secret ballot, the direct election of Senators, the eight-hour day—won enactment in the progressive and New Deal eras of the next century. Yet at least one historian has argued that the fundamental cooperative and democratic spirit of the agrarian radicals was lost along the way.

NATIONAL PEOPLE’S PARTY PLATFORM

Assembled upon the 116th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the People’s Party of America, in their first national convention, invoking upon their action the blessing of Almighty God, put forth in the name and on behalf of the people of this country, the following preamble and declaration of principles:

PREAMBLE

The conditions which surround us best justify our co-operation; we meet in the midst of a nation brought to the verge of moral, political, and material ruin. Corruption dominates the ballot-box, the Legislatures, the Congress, and touches even the ermine of the bench. The people are demoralized; most of the States have been compelled to isolate the voters at the polling places to prevent universal intimidation and bribery. The newspapers are largely subsidized or muzzled, public opinion silenced, business prostrated, homes covered with mortgages, labor impoverished, and the land concentrating in the hands of capitalists. The urban workmen are denied the right to organize for self-protection, imported pauperized labor beats down their wages, a hireling standing army, unrecognized by our laws, is established to shoot them down, and they are rapidly degenerating into European conditions. The fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few, unprecedented in the history of mankind; and the possessors of those, in turn, despise the republic and endanger liberty. From the same prolific womb of governmental injustice we breed the two great classes—tramps and millionaires.

The national power to create money is appropriated to enrich bondholders; a vast public debt payable in legal tender currency has been funded into gold-bearing bonds, thereby adding millions to the burdens of the people.

Silver, which has been accepted as coin since the dawn of history, has been demonetized to add to the purchasing power of gold by decreasing the value of all forms of property as well as human labor, and the supply of currency is purposely abridged to fatten usurers, bankrupt enterprise, and enslave industry. A vast conspiracy against mankind has been organized on two continents, and it is rapidly taking possession of the world. If not met and overthrown at once it forebodes terrible social convulsions, the destruction of civilization, or the establishment of an absolute despotism.

We have witnessed for more than a quarter of a century the struggles of the two great political parties for power and plunder, while grievous wrongs have been inflicted upon the suffering people. We charge that the controlling influences dominating both these parties have permitted the existing dreadful conditions to develop without serious effort to prevent or restrain them. Neither do they now promise us any substantial reform. They have agreed together to ignore, in the coming campaign, every issue but one. They propose to drown the outcries of a plundered people with the uproar of a sham battle over the tariff, so that capitalists, corporations, national banks, rings, trusts, watered stock, the demonetization of silver and the oppressions of the usurers may all be lost sight of. They propose to sacrifice our homes, lives, and children on the altar of mammon; to destroy the multitude in order to secure corruption funds from the millionaires.

Assembled on the anniversary of the birthday of the nation, and filled with the spirit of the grand general and chief who established our independence, we seek to restore the government of the Republic to the hands of “the plain people,” with which class it originated. We assert our purposes to be identical with the purposes of the National Constitution; to form a

more perfect union and establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity.

We declare that this Republic can only endure as a free government while built upon the love of the whole people for each other and for the nation; that it cannot be pinned together by bayonets; that the civil war is over, and that every passion and resentment which grew out of it must die with it, and that we must be in fact, as we are in name, one united brotherhood of free men.

Our country finds itself confronted by conditions for which there is no precedent in the history of the world; our annual agricultural productions amount to billions of dollars in value, which must, within a few weeks or months, be exchanged for billions of dollars' worth of commodities consumed in their production; the existing currency supply is wholly inadequate to make this exchange; the results are falling prices, the formation of combines and rings, the impoverishment of the producing class. We pledge ourselves that if given power we will labor to correct these evils by wise and reasonable legislation, in accordance with the terms of our platform.

We believe that the power of government—in other words, of the people—should be expanded (as in the case of the postal service) as rapidly and as far as the good sense of an intelligent people and the teachings of experience shall justify, to the end that oppression, injustice, and poverty shall eventually cease in the land.

While our sympathies as a party of reform are naturally upon the side of every proposition which will tend to make men intelligent, virtuous, and temperate, we nevertheless regard these questions, important as they are, as secondary to the great issues now pressing for solution, and upon which not only our individual prosperity but the very existence of free institutions depend; and we ask all men to first help us to determine whether we are to have a republic to administer before we differ as to the conditions upon which it is to be administered, believing that the forces of reform this day organized will never cease to move forward until every wrong is remedied and equal rights and equal privileges securely established for all the men and women of this country.

PLATFORM

We declare, therefore—

First.—That the union of the labor forces of the United States this day consummated shall be permanent and perpetual; may its spirit enter into all hearts for the salvation of the Republic and the uplifting of mankind.

Second.—Wealth belongs to him who creates it, and every dollar taken from industry without an equivalent is robbery. "If any will not work, neither shall he eat." The interests of rural and civic labor are the same; their enemies are identical.

Third.—We believe that the time has come when the railroad corporations will either own the people or the people must own the railroads, and should the government enter upon the work of owning and managing all railroads, we should favor an amendment to the Constitution by which all persons engaged in the government service shall be placed under a civil-service regulation of the most rigid character, so as to prevent the increase of the power of the national administration by the use of such additional government employees.

FINANCE.—We demand a national currency, safe, sound, and flexible, issued by the general government only, a full legal tender for all debts, public and private, and that without the use of banking corporations, a just, equitable, and efficient means of distribution direct to the people, at a tax not to exceed 2 per cent. per annum, to be provided as set forth in the sub-treasury plan of the Farmers' Alliance, or a better system; also by payments in discharge of its obligations for public improvements.

1. We demand free and unlimited coinage of silver and gold at the present legal ratio of 16 to 1.
2. We demand that the amount of circulating medium be speedily increased to not less than \$50 per capita.
3. We demand a graduated income tax.

4. We believe that the money of the country should be kept as much as possible in the hands of the people, and hence we demand that all State and national revenues shall be limited to the necessary expenses of the government, economically and honestly administered.

5. We demand that postal savings banks be established by the government for the safe deposit of the earnings of the people and to facilitate exchange.

TRANSPORTATION—Transportation being a means of exchange and a public necessity, the government should own and operate the railroads in the interest of the people. The telegraph, telephone, like the post-office system, being a necessity for the transmission of news, should be owned and operated by the government in the interest of the people.

LAND.—The land, including all the natural sources of wealth, is the heritage of the people, and should not be monopolized for speculative purposes, and alien ownership of land should be prohibited. All land now held by railroads and other corporations in excess of their actual needs, and all lands now owned by aliens should be reclaimed by the government and held for actual settlers only.

EXPRESSION OF SENTIMENTS

Your Committee on Platform and Resolutions beg leave unanimously to report the following:

Whereas, Other questions have been presented for our consideration, we hereby submit the following, not as a part of the Platform of the People's Party, but as resolutions expressive of the sentiment of this Convention.

1. RESOLVED, That we demand a free ballot and a fair count in all elections and pledge ourselves to secure it to every legal voter without Federal Intervention, through the adoption by the States of the unpervverted Australian or secret ballot system.

2. RESOLVED, That the revenue derived from a graduated income tax should be applied to the reduction of the burden of taxation now levied upon the domestic industries of this country.

3. RESOLVED, That we pledge our support to fair and liberal pensions to ex-Union soldiers and sailors.

4. RESOLVED, That we condemn the fallacy of protecting American labor under the present system, which opens our ports to the pauper and criminal classes of the world and crowds out our wage-earners; and we denounce the present ineffective laws against contract labor, and demand the further restriction of undesirable emigration.

5. RESOLVED, That we cordially sympathize with the efforts of organized workingmen to shorten the hours of labor, and demand a rigid enforcement of the existing eight-hour law on Government work, and ask that a penalty clause be added to the said law.

6. RESOLVED, That we regard the maintenance of a large standing army of mercenaries, known as the Pinkerton system, as a menace to our liberties, and we demand its abolition. . . .

7. RESOLVED, That we commend to the favorable consideration of the people and the reform press the legislative system known as the initiative and referendum.

8. RESOLVED, That we favor a constitutional provision limiting the office of President and Vice-President to one term, and providing for the election of Senators of the United States by a direct vote of the people.

9. RESOLVED, That we oppose any subsidy or national aid to any private corporation for any purpose.

10. RESOLVED, That this convention sympathizes with the Knights of Labor and their righteous contest with the tyrannical combine of clothing manufacturers of Rochester, and declare it to be a duty of all who hate tyranny and oppression to refuse to purchase the goods made by the said manufacturers, or to patronize any merchants who sell such goods.

Source: *The World Almanac*, 1893 (New York: 1893), 83–85. Reprinted in George Brown Tindall, ed., *A Populist Reader, Selections from the Works of American Populist Leaders* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 90–96.

THE MISSION OF THE POPULIST PARTY.

BY SENATOR WILLIAM ALFRED PEPPER, OF KANSAS.

THE Populist Party is an organized demand that the functions of government shall be exercised only for the mutual benefit of all the people. It asserts that government is useful only to the extent that it serves to advance the common weal. Believing that the public good is paramount to private interests, it protests against the delegation of sovereign powers to private agencies. Its motto is: "Equal rights to all; special privileges to none." Its creed is written in a single line of the Declaration of Independence—"All men are created equal." Devoted to the objects for which the constitution of the United States was adopted, it proposes to "form a more perfect union" by cultivating a national sentiment among the people; to "insure domestic tranquility" by securing to every man and woman what they earn; to "establish justice" by procuring an equitable distribution of the products and profits of labor; to "provide for the common defence" by interesting every citizen in the ownership of his home; to "promote the general welfare" by abolishing class legislation and limiting the government to its proper functions; and to "secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity" by protecting the producing masses against the spoliation of speculators and usurers.

The Populist claims that the mission of his party is to emancipate labor. He believes that men are not only created equal, but that they are equally entitled to the use of natural resources in procuring means of subsistence and comfort. He believes that an equitable distribution of the products and profits of labor is essential to the highest form of civilization; that taxation should only be for public purposes, and that all moneys raised by taxes should go into the public treasury; that public needs should be

supplied by public agencies, and that the people should be served equally and alike.

The party believes in popular government. Its demands may be summarized fairly to be—

1. An exclusively national currency in amount amply sufficient for all the uses for which money is needed by the people, to consist of gold and silver coined on equal terms, and government paper, each and all legal tender in payment of debts of whatever nature or amount, receivable for taxes and all public dues.

2. That rates of interest for the use of money be reduced to the level of average net profits in productive industries.

3. That the means of public transportation be brought under public control, to the end that carriage shall not cost more than it is reasonably worth, and that charges may be made uniform.

4. That large private land-holdings be discouraged by law.

It is charged against Populists that they favor paternalism in government. This is an error. They only demand that public functions shall be exercised by public agents, and that sovereign powers shall not be delegated to private persons or corporations having only private interests to serve. They would popularize government to the end that it may accomplish the work for which it was established—to serve the people, all the people, not only a few.

If it be paternalism to require the government to look after any of the private interests of the people, why do we not drive from our grounds as a tramp the postman who delivers our mail? If it be paternalism to bring our transportation business under public control, why do we not repeal the inter-State commerce law and restore the carrying trade to private citizens from whose rapacity the people were partially released some years ago? If it be paternalism to establish government agencies to supply currency to the people, what means the national bank act whose title reads: "An act to provide a national currency secured by a pledge of United States bonds, and to provide for the circulation and redemption thereof?"

All there is in the charge of paternalism lies in the fact that Populists believe that, as to these particular matters, the people would be served, more equitably and at greatly reduced expense, by public agents working on fixed salaries, than by private persons who use their business for private ends.

It will be observed that the party deals with live issues only, and they are those chiefly which relate to the use of natural resources of subsistence and to the distribution of property and property values. This is the only party that clearly expresses a well-defined position on the "money question." It states the kind of money the party wants—gold, silver and paper; it demands that the metals be coined freely, in unlimited quantities, at a ratio of 16 to 1; that the currency shall be issued by the general government only—not by banks—and that it shall be a full legal tender.

To the financial part of the platform it is objected—

1. That the volume of currency required in a given community or State is an unknown quantity, that too much is worse than too little, and that, therefore, it is always better to be within rather than without the proper limit.

2. That paper money cannot safely be issued except on a specie basis, and that the issue ought not to exceed three or four dollars to one dollar of the coin reserve.

3. That no more silver should be coined unless, through international agreement, the principal commercial nations agree to use silver coin at an agreed ratio to gold.

4. That gold is the only proper and safe money material, because its commercial value is always equal to its coin value, and therefore it is the "money of the world."

To the first objection the Populist answers that it is no more difficult to ascertain how much money is required by the people than it is to find out how much of any staple article they need. In normal conditions there is a normal demand for things, and the demand indicates the number, quantity or amount required. Our Treasury officials, in their annual reports, place stress on the need of a more "flexible" currency to meet increased demands which appear periodically—and especially when farmers' crops are to be moved. Bankers complain of scarcity of money at particular seasons. They discover the scarcity because of a demand which they are unable to supply. People make known their need of money in much the same way that they let their need of anything else be known—by asking for it, offering to buy or desiring to borrow or hire it. If it be suggested that the demand might be so great that to supply it would be to derange values, disturb business and bankrupt the people, it is answered that in

normal conditions men do not purchase more of anything than they need. Why should they buy more money than they need? If they did the excess would advantage them nothing; it would be utterly useless, as all idle money is useless. Populists do not demand an unlimited supply of currency, they ask only for enough; and as an indication of what, from their present information, they regard as a fair limit, they place the amount at not less than fifty dollars per capita, and that is less than we had once when we had none too much.

Answering the second objection, there is no need of an exclusively specie basis for money. That doctrine is a legacy of the dark ages; it had its origin in barbarism. The proper basis for money is property—property that the people produce and of which they have a surplus to exchange for other commodities, and this includes gold and silver.

Hon. John Davis, a distinguished Populist, thus defines certain essential prerequisites to a good currency:

“First, there must be a regularly established government, as the issuing of money is an act of sovereignty. The said government must be in practical operation, collecting and disbursing revenues and performing the usual monetary functions of a civilized government. Then the money, when issued, must be receivable in the revenues of the issuing government, and it must possess the quality of legal tender. The quantity of the money issued must be in reasonable proportion to the revenues collected; and the material of the money must be fashioned and executed in the highest style of art, above the arts of the counterfeiters.”

Value is indefinable, yet everybody understands its meaning. It is an ideal thing, though we all speak of it as if it were a definite quantity. Let a given number and quantity of surplus products of a community be collected and compared with respect to the amount of human labor expended in their production, and find some one article whose value alone, divided or multiplied, is a common divisor of the values of the rest, and you have a unit of value. To illustrate: Take, say, a bushel of wheat; divided into tenths, one-tenth will measure the value of one pound of cotton; divided into hundredths, one-hundredth will measure the value of one pound of salt; entire it will measure the value of a pig; multiplied by twenty-five, it will measure the value of a cow; multiplied by seventy-five it will measure the value of a horse; and so on as to the value of all other articles. Here we have a common measure of value—a bushel of wheat. What, then, let us inquire, is the value

of a bushel of wheat? Why, what it will purchase of other articles in the open market. Of course there will be fluctuations in quantity produced from year to year, the demand will not always be the same, many circumstances will operate to vary prices; still, for common convenience we use a bushel of wheat for the common measure. But wheat, and especially a bushel of it, is an unwieldy thing to use in making exchanges, in paying debts and the like. Let us give a name to the value of a bushel of wheat—what we all understand the value to be, though we cannot define it—and then agree on some small, light, convenient article of manufacture to represent that value. Say we use the word dollar as a name or title to represent the value of the wheat measure, and let us make the representative out of silver or aluminum or paper, and use that for money in place of wheat. We use silver dollars now, and paper dollars, and the foregoing illustration explains their relation to other things. The intrinsic value of the two dollar pieces is not the same; that is to say, the commercial value of the materials of which they are made is greater in one than in the other, but the money value of each is exactly the same. Value resides in the property dealt in, and not necessarily in the money pieces which pay for it. A paper dollar is quite as good to buy sugar with as a dollar made of gold or silver. Intrinsic value in money coins is a delusion. The doctrine of equivalents is impossible of application now. Whatever value money has the law gives it. Legal tender is a legal function imparted by the sovereign power of the people for their convenience in transacting their business.

But, if we should agree that a "specie basis" is necessary, our own experience proves that a much larger amount of paper than three to four dollars can be floated on one dollar of gold reserve. Our national bank circulation is now about \$180,000,000. It is redeemable in United States notes, of which there is \$346,000,000 out, and that is all redeemable in gold. Treasury notes issued in payment for silver bullion amounts to, say, \$156,000,000, all payable in gold, so the department holds. These several sums, amounting to nearly \$700,000,000, are all redeemable in gold, and we have only \$100,000,000 provided for that purpose—one dollar in gold to float seven dollars in paper.

Answering the third objection, it is urged that silver is quite as good as gold for use in money coins, and that both metals

ought to be so used if one of them is, so as to divide between them the money work to be performed. The base will be more ample with both than with one, the average fluctuation in bullion values will be less, and a fair general level of prices of other commodities will be more easily maintained. We ought to coin both metals freely, or, if we discard one, then in order to prevent undue falling of prices by reason of the increasing value of the other, it will be better to discard that also, and resort to the use of some other suitable material of little value to make our money coins out of. The talk about maintaining parity between the values of metals, unless both are wholly monopolized by the government, is silly; but to maintain parity between the value of money coins is easily done if the law does not discriminate against any of them. We always maintained coin parity when we minted gold and silver on equal terms, and we have done so twenty years—since 1873—with a constantly increasing stock of silver, and with limited coinage. It is the law that maintains parity among values of money pieces, not the market price of the material of which they are made. Government cannot regulate prices of articles sold and bought in the open market; but it can regulate the value of money. It is true that when a marketable commodity of considerable value is used for money coins, traders, bankers, and speculators, by dealing in the commodity, may run prices up or down at their pleasure and thus derange values generally, create “corners,” and force panics.

As matter of fact the people use very little coin. To ascertain the proportions of different kinds of money circulating, the Comptroller of the Currency procured statements from 3,364 national banks for the first day of July, 1890, and from 3,474 banks for September 17th of the same year; and from these reports it appeared that of the total receipts of \$421,824,726 on the first day named, and \$327,278,251 on the second day—a grand total of \$748,102,977 for both days—the “cash” receipts were but 8.96 per cent., and 91.04 per cent. was in “checks, drafts, and other substitutes for money.” Of the first day’s receipts, .89 per cent. was in gold coin and .32 per cent. in silver coin—1.21 per cent. in both. Of the second day’s receipts, 1.13 per cent. was in gold coin and .43 per cent. in silver coin—1.56 per cent. in both. If we use so little coin, why all this fuss about it? A busy, productive, prosperous people like ours can always get gold

for their wheat and cotton as long as people who want wheat and cotton have gold to pay for them.

Answering the fourth objection, the commercial value of gold bullion is largely dependent upon its value for coinage. The value of the gold coin now in the world is estimated at nearly \$4,000,000,000, the accumulation of many centuries. Gold is practically indestructible. If this vast amount were demonetized and thrown on the market, its value, pound for pound, would fall quite as low as that of silver bullion now. But, aside from this consideration, there is not gold enough in the world nor in this country, nor in any other, to perform the necessary money functions only, at the expense of all other property values. There is gold enough if we are content with wheat at fifty cents a bushel and cotton at five cents a pound, with a constant lowering of the general level of prices; and that is what a permanent gold basis means.

The doctrine was well stated by the Royal Commission, in their "Bullion Report," eighty-three years ago: "The amount of gold in the world will suffice to perform the exchanges of the world. If these be more or less, it would only affect the average level of prices the world over."

The assessed valuation of the taxable property of the people of the United States is about \$24,000,000,000, the estimated value being put at about two and one-half times that amount, or say \$60,000,000,000. A large part of this, of course, represents real estate and other fixed property that does not often change hands, and therefore but little active money is required to handle it. But the value of our internal commerce has grown to an almost inconceivably large amount. In 1877 it was equal to twenty-five times the value of our total foreign commerce; and if the same rate of progress has continued to the present—and there is no reason to doubt that it has—our trade among ourselves is not less than \$45,000,000,000. And this does not include any portion of the vast aggregate of local traffic among the people at their home market towns. Nor does it include banking business, nor that of insurance companies and loan agents. It is within reasonable bounds to say that the people of the United States now transact a business among themselves, which requires the constant use of ready money, equal to \$100,000,000,000 annually. Yet the Treasury officials say that our total stock of money is but little

over \$1,600,000,000, and nearly half of that is in Treasury and bank vaults, held as reserves—not in use at all. When we add to the amount of these reserves the moneys kept in the treasuries of State and municipal officers, and the errors in estimates of gold in the country, the free money—that which is always available for use in business—is found to be not in excess of \$600,000,000, or less than \$10 per capita; and at the late extraordinary session of Congress an annual increase of about \$50,000,000 was cut off. Of the gold coin supposed to be in the country a reserve fund of \$100,000,000 is kept in the United States Treasury, leaving but \$400,000,000 to “perform the exchanges” of a great and growing people, doing a business among themselves amounting to \$100,000,000,000, a sum two hundred and fifty times as large as our stock of available gold.

To say that, in the absence of coin, paper cannot be made good money is to deny our own experience. The people of the United States have been using little else than paper money during all of the last thirty-two years, though we have been on a gold basis, and no man has lost a dollar by its use. Our losses have come from its having been taken away from us, and funded in coin bonds, increasing our debts and depriving us in large measure of the means of payment. The depreciation of property values by a rapid withdrawal of government paper, from 1865 to 1869, cost the country more than the great war.

The Populist party is the only party that honestly favors good money. Democrats and Republicans alike declare their purpose to make all dollars equally good and to maintain the parity between them, and the recent act of Congress repealing the purchasing clause of the Sherman law contains a similar declaration; but when an amendment was proposed to the bill in the Senate to make good the platform promises by incorporating them in the law, there were not enough Senators in favor of it to secure a yea and nay vote on the amendment. We have seven different kinds of money, and only one of them is good, according to the determination of the Treasury officials. Bank notes are not legal tender, neither are silver certificates, nor gold certificates. Treasury notes are not legal tender in cases where another kind of money is expressed in the contract, and United States notes (greenbacks) will not pay either principal or interest on any government bond. None of our paper

money is taxable. Silver dollars are by law full legal tender in payment of debts to any amount whatever, but the Treasury does not pay them out on any obligation unless they are specially requested. In practice, we have but one full legal tender money—gold coin; and Republicans and Democrats are agreed on continuing that policy; while Populists demand gold, silver, and paper money, all equally full legal tender.

The fact that we have now out about \$700,000,000 in paper is proof that our stock of coin is utterly inadequate to perform all the money duty required in the people's business transactions. The discontinuance of silver coinage stops the supply from that source. It is believed by men best informed on the subject that the gold used in the arts has reached an amount about equal to the annual output of the mines. Then the world's stock of gold coin will not be increased unless the arts are drawn upon, and that can be done successfully only at a price above the money value of the coin. Russia, Austria, Italy, and the United States all want more gold. Where is it to come from? And what will it cost the purchaser? Are we to drop back to Roman methods of procuring treasure? When all the nations set out on gold hunting expeditions, who will be the victor and what will become of the spoils?

It is evident that we must have more money, and Congress alone is authorized to prepare it. States are prohibited by the Constitution of the United States from making anything but gold and silver coin a legal tender in payment of debts, and nothing is money that is not a tender. The people can rely only on Congress for a safe circulating medium.

Populists demand not only a sufficiency of money, but a reduction of interest rates at least as low as the general level of the people's savings. They aver that with interest at present legal and actual rates, an increase in the volume of money in the country would be of little permanent benefit, for bankers and brokers would control its circulation, just as they do now. But with interest charges reduced to three or two per cent. the business of the money-lender would be no more profitable than that of the farmer—and why should it be?

It is strange that most people have not yet discovered the destroying power of interest. Let us take two examples—Massachusetts and the United States. In 1790 the taxable property

of Massachusetts was given at \$44,024,349. If that amount—\$44,000,000 in round numbers—had been put at interest then (1790) at six per cent., compounded annually, and continued to 1890—one hundred years—it would have amounted to \$14,937,461,615. The taxable property of Massachusetts in 1890 was valued at \$2,154,134,626—a little more than one-seventh part of the amount which the State's value one hundred years before would have amounted to in the same length of time at six per cent. interest compounded annually. The property valuation of the United States in 1790 was estimated to be \$619,977,247. If that sum had then been put at interest at six per cent. and continued to 1890—one hundred years—compounded annually, it would have amounted to \$210,358,279,907. The estimated value of our property in 1890 was about \$60,000,000,000, but little more than one-fourth of what our value one hundred years before would have amounted to at six per cent. interest for the same time, compounded annually. It appears that a six per cent. rate of interest would have accumulated in one hundred years \$12,783,326,989, more than the people of Massachusetts, with all their advantages, were able to save during the same time out of their combined labor and its profits. It further appears that the same rate of interest would have accumulated \$150,000,000,000 more in one hundred years than the people of the United States, with all their acquisitions of new territory, were able to save out of their labor and its profits in the same time. We have been paying six to twelve per cent. annual interest—often much higher—when we have not saved out of our combined earnings as much as four per cent. This explains how the wealth of the country is being so rapidly transferred from the people who produced it to those who did not. It is passing through the interest channel. The rate of interest ought to be regulated by the general level of net profits in productive industry and kept at a figure which men engaged in usual vocations can afford to pay, return the principal, and save the property purchased with the money hired. To illustrate: John engages to buy a farm, and borrows money to pay for it, or purchases on time, which is the same thing. The rate of interest ought to be what, with prudent management through a reasonable number of average seasons, he can pay yearly, with part of the principal, until he has paid out and has the farm left.

Three per cent. compounded annually is a fair average the

world over for labor's saving. It has been a little more in the United States, but a gold basis will soon bring us to the general level, and that will settle lower as population and trade increase.

While the Populist party favors government ownership and control of railroads, it wisely leaves for future consideration the means by which such ownership and control can best be brought about. The conditions which seem to make necessary such a change in our transportation system preclude all probability of its ever being practicable, if it were desirable, to purchase existing railway lines. The total capitalization of railroads in the United States in 1890 was put at \$9,871,378,389—nearly ten thousand million dollars. It would be putting the figures high to say that the roads are worth one-half the amount of their capital stock. This leaves a fictitious value of \$5,000,000,000 which the people must maintain for the roads by transportation charges twice as high as they would be if the capitalization were only half as much. It is the excessive capitalization which the people have to maintain that they complain about. It would be an unbusinesslike proceeding for the people to purchase roads when they could build better ones just where and when they are needed for less than half the money that would be required to clear these companies' books. It is conceded that none of the highly capitalized railroad corporations expect to pay their debts. If they can keep even on interest account, they do well, and that is all they are trying to do. While charges have been greatly reduced, they are still based on capitalization, and courts have held that the companies are entitled to reasonable profits on their investment. The people have but one safe remedy—to construct their own roads as needed, and then they will "own and control" them.

This is not a new doctrine. A select committee of the Senate of the United States, at the head of which was Hon. William Windom, then a Senator and afterward Secretary of the Treasury appointed in December, 1872, reported among other recommendations one proposing the construction of a "government freight railway," for the purpose of effectively regulating interstate commerce. A government freight railway would have no capitalization, no debt, bonded or otherwise; its charges would be only what it would cost to handle the traffic and keep the road in repair. That would reduce cost of carriage to a minimum, and nothing else will.

Populists complain of legislation in the interest of favored classes. At the very time when the homestead law was passed a scheme was hatching to absorb the public lands by railway corporations. Scarcely had the great war begun when a plan was laid to establish a system of national banking based on the people's debts; and while customs duties were raised to increase the public revenues, cheap foreign labor was brought in under contract to man the factories. Banks have been specially favored. When it was to their interest to withdraw their notes it was done with impunity. They have been permitted to openly violate the law which authorizes their existence, and this without rebuke. The United States Senate shields them from exposure. When the Treasury was flush, public moneys were lavishly left with the banks to use without interest, and when the great banks in New York city needed funds to relieve the stringency in the "money market" there, they had only to ask and they received. And now that the Treasury is running short in gold reserves, there is a demand for more bonds to purchase more gold to be used in redeeming Treasury notes which the law requires to be redeemed in silver, thus again reducing the reserves, making another bond issue necessary to procure more gold; and so on, as the "money market" may require. These "Napoleons of Finance" are playing a bold game.

Since 1879, a period of fourteen years, the banks have had free use of an annual average of \$18,000,000 of the public moneys. This they have used to lend to their patrons at an average rate not less than ten per cent., while at the same time drawing four per cent. or four and one-half per cent. from the Government on bonds deposited as security for the money left with them, as the following statement shows:

STATEMENT SHOWING AMOUNT OF THE BALANCE OF PUBLIC MONEYS HELD BY THE NATIONAL BANK DEPOSITORIES AT THE CLOSE OF BUSINESS JUNE 30 OF EACH YEAR SINCE AND INCLUDING 1879 IS AS FOLLOWS:

1879.....	\$7,183,403.42	1887.....	\$19,190,076.79
1880.....	7,999,953.86	1888.....	51,913,489.74
1881.....	8,973,550.79	1889.....	43,303,611.91
1882.....	9,610,432.86	1890.....	28,594,461.79
1883.....	10,030,698.33	1891.....	27,900,329.65
1884.....	10,716,144.17	1892.....	12,539,446.61
1885.....	10,385,141.34	1893.....	12,393,071.11
1886.....	14,036,632.18		

No amount of interest has been paid by national bank depositories for the use of the public moneys deposited therewith.

If farmers had asked for the use of that money and offered

their farms as security for repayment, they would have learned that the law was not made for their benefit.

Since 1880, premium has been paid on Government bonds by the Treasury Department amounting in the aggregate to \$60,125,218.98, as the following statement shows :

STATEMENT SHOWING AMOUNT OF PREMIUM PAID ON GOVERNMENT BONDS SINCE AND INCLUDING THE YEAR 1880.

Year.	Amount.	Year.	Amount.
1880.....	\$2,793,820.42	1890.....	\$20,394,224.06
1881.....	1,051,248.78	1891.....	10,401,270.61
1888.....	8,270,842.46		
1889.....	17,292,362.65	Total.....	\$60,125,218.98

Nearly all that gratuity to bondholders was bestowed during years of great depression and hardship among other classes of people.

The Treasury has been in the habit of advancing interest on bonds six months to nine months before it was due. This was done ostensibly in the public interest, but the bondholder was the only person that profited by the transaction. The following statement shows how much of the people's money went that way since 1880.

STATEMENT SHOWING AMOUNT OF MONEY ADVANCED BY THE TREASURY FOR INTEREST NOT DUE ON GOVERNMENT BONDS SINCE AND INCLUDING THE YEAR 1881.

Year.	Amount.	Year.	Amount.
1881.....	\$3,091,947.07	1887.....	\$8,735,743.23
1882.....	11,165,900.21	1888.....	13,904,117.50
1883.....	3,937,736.00	1891.....	13,229,726.50
1884.....	230,969.02	1892.....	5,361,086.80
From July 1, 1883, to Oct. 1, 1892.....			5,062,666.15
Total.....			\$66,697,883.18

The use of \$66,000,000 for six months at the rate of five per cent. per annum is \$3,300,000—money enough to pay the wages of a thousand workingmen a year at present rates.

Rapid accumulation of wealth by a few citizens, as we have seen it in the United States during the last thirty years, is evidence of morbidly abnormal conditions. It is inconsistent with free institutions. It is breeding anarchy and trouble. No man can honestly take to himself what he does not earn ; and if he does no more than that, riches will come to him slowly. It is only when he gets what he does not earn that his "success" attracts attention. Fortunes running into millions of dollars must be made up of property and profits mostly produced and earned by persons other than those who claim them.

No man ever earned a million dollars. If he was moved to

great undertakings, nature's God inspired him. And if, in the play of his ambition he marshalled effective forces, his equipment cost him little. To a great mind success is compensation. The value of its labor cannot be measured with money. A strong man's intellect moves as easily as a blacksmith's arm. Both are gifts.

The best men are content with little. Vast enterprises which move the world are maintained by contributions from the labor of the poor. Leaders do but organize and direct; the rank and file do all the rest. Apply the "iron law of wages" equally to all that work and you scale down the salaries of many useless people. If the Republic is to endure we must encourage the average man.

W. A. PEPPER.